

Ports, waterways begin opening in affected areas

Rescue, evacuation operations continue

ST. LOUIS -- Coast Guard air operations rescued 1,245 people and conducted 385 sorties Friday, bring the total of lives saved by boat and air to more than 9,500 people since Monday.

"Saving human life, helping to sustain those in need with critical relief supplies, and evacuating critical need patients remains the Coast Guard's top priority," said Capt. Kevin L. Marshall, Chief of Staff for the Coast Guard's Eighth Coast Guard District. "In addition we continue bringing additional teams into the region to work on reconstituting the waterways to get them reopened to maritime traffic as quickly and as safely as possible."

The Lower Mississippi River has been opened to deep draft vessels with a 35-foot draft or less for one way daylight traffic only.

Only the Port of Gulfport, Miss., remains closed to all traffic. Pascagoula, Miss., is open to vessels with 12-foot draft or less. Mobile is open to barge traffic only. Pensacola, Fla., and Destin/Panama City, Fla., are open to vessels with a 31-foot draft or less.

More than 2,200 Coast Guard personnel and assets from all over the country are currently responding to the post-hurricane response operations, and more continue to arrive daily. Twenty-nine Coast Guard cutters, 52 aircraft, and numerous aids to navigation teams and incident management teams are in the Gulf area. The Coast Guard has recalled 550 reservists to active duty and has the authorization to recall up to 800 reservists.